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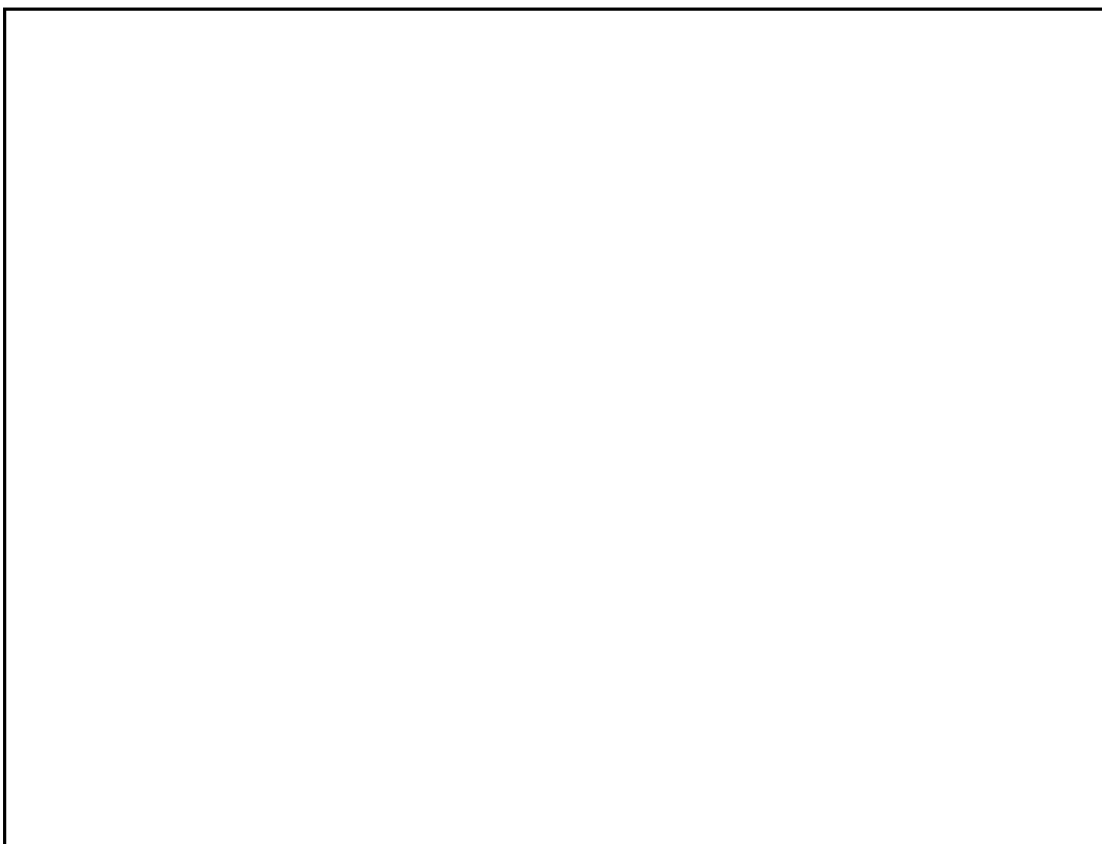
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THAILAND: Prime Minister Thanom evidently plans to stay on until 1973. (Page 4)



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THAILAND: Prime Minister Thanom evidently is now planning to retain his post until parliamentary elections in early 1973.

The cabinet voted on 15 June to extend Thanom's term as supreme commander of the armed forces one year beyond the customary retirement age of 60. Last year, when Thanom was having considerable difficulty with Parliament and his own Saha Prache Thai political party, it was widely assumed in Bangkok that he would step down as prime minister when he retires from the army this fall. The atmosphere in Bangkok has changed considerably in recent months and so has Thanom's attitude toward continuing in office.

The extension of Thanom's retirement date might be the result of a political compromise between the prime minister and Deputy Prime Minister Praphat. The high-level meetings on Thanom's future were convened at the initiative of Praphat while Thanom was on a visit to Malaysia. Praphat may have acted on his own, but he and Thanom talked about their political futures last week, and some understanding may have been worked out at that time.

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Even if Thanom and Praphat have reached such an arrangement, it is still possible that like other "understandings" over the past year it will prove to be short-lived. The respective supporters of the

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two men presumably will continue to maneuver for advantage in the interim before the proposed transition. There may also be some difficulty with younger members of the military establishment, who probably will view Thanom's extension as a bad precedent that further postpones the day when they might move into top leadership positions.

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